

# **WHO IS WATCHING YOU, AND WHY?**

## **A SOCIAL IDENTITY ANALYSIS OF SURVEILLANCE**

Submitted by Aisling Therese O'Donnell to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology, January 2010.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

**Aisling Therese O'Donnell**

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**AISLING THERESE O'DONNELL**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people to whom I am truly indebted for their help, advice, and support while working on this thesis. It seems fitting to begin by thanking my supervisors, Michelle Ryan and Jolanda Jetten. Without you this really would not have been possible – you have been generous with your time, experience and insights, and I am extremely grateful. However, in addition to giving me help and encouragement with my work, you have been incredible mentors to me throughout my time at Exeter. Your own dedication and enthusiasm for research is an inspiration, and your accomplishments have always served as an example to me of what it is possible to achieve. Above all, you have been friends as well as supervisors and it means a lot to know that you are always on my side!

I am grateful to the others in the IPSIS and SEORG groups at Exeter, for providing a supportive, friendly and productive atmosphere for me to take part in while completing my PhD. Without our sense of community, my time here would have felt very different. I would like to thank my third-year students Megan Clinch, Sarah Farrar, and Tamsin Meadows for allowing me to develop my skills at being the supervisor rather than the supervisee, and also for collecting the data for three of the studies in this thesis! Your hard work and enthusiasm made it a pleasure to work with you last year. I thank Clifford Stott for encouraging me to come to Exeter and for helping me to get here, plus his continuing support even now; and Orla Muldoon, Clifford Stevenson, Steve Reicher, and Dominic Bryan for giving me a job at the end of it all. I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the Economic and Social Research Council for financially supporting my studies.

My friends at Exeter have provided me with a vital network of social support while I completed my PhD. In the psychology department, I want to thank the Collective – Laura Smith, Ivonne Hoeger, and Andrea Day – and also Hetta Roberts, Lou Millar, and Beth Nicholls, for always being there for me during my successes and failures, listening when I moaned, providing much-needed distractions and coffee breaks, and for taking me to watch stupid films and drink inadvisable cocktails (or, most commonly, G&Ts). All of this was crucially

important to the completion of this thesis! Outside of the department, I thank my thoughtful housemate Katie Shewen for unwaveringly being my cheerleader, even when I announced I was deserting her two months earlier than planned; and my good friend Siôn Williams-Eliyesil, for making me believe I could do this on the occasions I felt as though I couldn't. Many other friends have contributed to making my time at Exeter so enjoyable, but there is not enough space here to list them all. You are all true friends, and your support means more to me than I can say.

Finally, I thank the people who have been there to support me for my whole life, as well as during my PhD. I am grateful for the love and generosity of my sister Sinéad, who has always been able to administer a refreshing dose of reality when I needed to be brought back down to earth. Above all, I would like to thank my parents Eoin and Yvonne for being the most supportive parents I could ever wish for. I would not be in this position today without your guidance, and the example you have both set for me. You have always made it clear that nothing I can ask will ever be too much for you; and your unconditional love and support means more than I can ever convey. I am extremely grateful and proud to have you as my family, and I dedicate this thesis to you both.

## **ABSTRACT**

The underlying theme that draws together all the chapters presented in this thesis is that surveillance, like any feature of our social world, is not imposed in a vacuum; and that information pertaining to the origin and purpose of surveillance is vital in determining how it will be perceived and evaluated (and how it will then impact on behaviour). The key aims of this thesis are, first, to demonstrate how a social identity approach can account for varying reactions to surveillance originating from different sources; second, to investigate how various contextual features exert their impact, resulting in the disparate perceptions of surveillance that exist in our society; and finally, to demonstrate how the imposition of surveillance can itself impact on the broader social context, including the relationship that is understood to exist between those watching and those being watched. These aims are broken down into ten research questions that are addressed in seven chapters.

Chapter 1 reviews the literature on perceptions of surveillance and that on social identity, and attempts to illustrate how they may be theoretically combined, resulting in the advancement of both fields. In Chapter 2, we present two studies which demonstrate a negative relationship between shared identity and the perception of surveillance as an invasion of privacy. This relationship was mediated by perceptions that the purpose of surveillance was to ensure safety. In Chapter 3, two studies demonstrate how level of surveillance moderates followers' responses to leaders with whom they either share identity, or not. Imposing high surveillance where identity was shared with a leader undermined perceptions of the leader as a team member and affected willingness to work for the group, reducing levels to that of leaders without a shared identity. Chapter 4 presents a study that aimed to investigate the role of social identity and surveillance in affecting both discretionary

behaviour and task performance. High surveillance led to higher productivity on a task, but this was associated with lower quality of work. Additionally, when identity was shared with the person in charge, helping this person was detrimentally affected by high, as opposed to low, surveillance; whereas no such differences were found where identity was not shared. Chapter 5 presents two studies which showed that framing surveillance as targeting the in-group led to outcomes such as increased privacy invasion, lower acceptability of surveillance, and reduced levels of trust in the implementers of surveillance, as compared to when surveillance was framed as targeting an out-group. However, a third study failed to replicate these results. In Chapter 6, we address how level of threat in the environment can affect evaluations of surveillance. Two studies showed that high levels of threat led to surveillance being seen as less privacy-invading, more necessary, and as having a safety purpose. Finally, in Chapter 7, we review and integrate our findings, discuss the limitations of the research, and consider the implications it has, both theoretically and practically. We conclude that, overall, the findings presented in this thesis support the notion that the source of surveillance and the perceived purpose for it are integral to the perception and interpretation of the surveillance.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	Page iii
<i>Abstract</i>	v
<i>Table of Contents</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	xii
<i>Statement of the candidate's contribution to co-authored papers &amp; chapters</i>	xiv
<i>Statement of the supervisors' contribution to co-authored papers &amp; chapters</i>	xvii
<b>CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Aims and scope of this thesis.....	3
Chapter outline	5
Surveillance .....	6
Background: Surveillance in the UK	6
Surveillance effectiveness & the financial cost	9
Unintended effects of surveillance: The impact upon privacy	11
Surveillance as privacy invasion	11
Acceptance of surveillance	14
Reconciling the discrepancy: When & why is surveillance invasive?	16
Surveillance: A summary	24
Identity.....	26
The social identity approach	27
Social identity theory	27
Self-categorisation theory	29
Social identity and social influence	31
Empirical evidence: Influence based on social identity	33
Social identity and surveillance	35
Can surveillance impact on identity?	38
Beyond perceptions and attitudes: Effects on behaviour	40
Contextual factors.....	42
The target and purpose of surveillance	43
Previous evidence: Why should target and purpose matter?	44
Threat and surveillance	47
Does threat justify surveillance?	49
Summary.....	51
The present research	52
The contribution of this thesis	54
<b>CHAPTER 2: Who is watching over you? The role of shared identity in perceptions of surveillance.....</b>	<b>56</b>
The role of social identity	58
The present research	60
Study 2.1.....	62
Method	62
Participants	62
Procedure	62
Measures	63
Results	64
Preliminary analyses	64
Mediational analyses	64
Discussion	65

Study 2.2.....	66
Method	68
Design	68
Participants	68
Procedure	68
Dependent measures	69
Results	70
Preliminary analyses	70
Privacy infringement	70
Appraisal of purpose of surveillance	72
Mediational analyses	73
Discussion	75
General discussion.....	75
Future research	77
Conclusions	79
<b>CHAPTER 3: Watching over your own: How surveillance moderates the impact of shared identity on perceptions of leaders and follower behaviour...</b>	<b>81</b>
Understanding leadership	82
Understanding surveillance	84
The Interacting Roles of Identity and Surveillance in Understanding Leadership	86
The present research	87
Study 3.1.....	87
Method	88
Design	88
Participants	88
Procedure	88
Dependent measures	90
Results	91
Manipulation checks	91
Leader perceptions	91
Discussion	92
Study 3.2.....	93
Method	95
Design	95
Participants	95
Procedure	95
Dependent measures	96
Results	97
Manipulation checks	97
Leader perceptions	98
Infringement on privacy	99
Willingness to work for the group	100
Mediational analyses	101
Discussion	104
General discussion.....	105
Implications and future research	107
Conclusions	109
<b>CHAPTER 4: The hidden costs of surveillance on performance and helping behaviour.....</b>	<b>112</b>
The present research	115



Method	116
Design	116
Participants	116
Procedure	116
Dependent measures	117
Results	118
Preliminary analyses	118
Surveillance manipulation check	119
Productivity	119
Quality	120
Task enjoyment	120
Helping behaviour	120
Discussion	121
Implications and conclusions	122
<b>CHAPTER 5: Smile, you're on CCTV! How perceptions of surveillance are affected by the framing of target and purpose.....</b>	<b>124</b>
How is the purpose of surveillance determined?	128
Framing for inclusion vs. exclusion	128
Framing and social identity	129
The present research	131
Study 5.1.....	132
Method	134
Design	134
Participants	134
Procedure	135
Dependent measures	135
Results	137
Privacy infringement	137
Acceptability of surveillance	138
Negative emotions towards surveillance	138
Identification	139
Mediational analyses	139
Discussion	141
Study 5.2.....	143
Method	145
Design	145
Participants	145
Procedure	145
Dependent measures	146
Results	147
Preliminary analyses	147
Privacy infringement	147
Acceptability of surveillance	148
Necessity of surveillance	148
Appraisal of the purpose of surveillance	149
Identification	149
Trust in authorities	149
Mediational analyses	150
Discussion	154
Study 5.3.....	156
Method	158
Design	158

Participants	158
Procedure	158
Dependent measures	159
Results	161
Manipulation check	161
Descriptives	161
Analysis of variance	162
Discussion	163
General discussion.....	165
Limitations and future research	166
Conclusions	168
<b>CHAPTER 6: The situational appropriateness of surveillance: Does high threat make it OK to be watched?.....</b>	<b>170</b>
Using threat to excuse surveillance – direct effects	172
Using threat to excuse surveillance – via identity processes	174
The present research	175
Study 6.1.....	176
Method	177
Design	177
Participants	177
Procedure	178
Dependent measures	178
Results	180
Preliminary analyses	180
Threat manipulation check	180
Privacy infringement	180
Necessity of surveillance	181
Appraisal of the purpose of surveillance	181
Identification	182
Mediational analyses	182
Discussion	184
Study 6.2.....	186
Method	188
Design	188
Participants	188
Procedure	188
Dependent measures	189
Results	191
Preliminary analyses	191
Threat manipulation check	191
Surveillance manipulation check	191
Privacy infringement	192
Acceptability of surveillance	192
Appraisal of the purpose of surveillance – protecting students	194
Appraisal of the purpose of surveillance – targeting students	194
Identification	194
Trust in the school’s intentions	194
Discussion	196
General discussion.....	197
Conclusions	201

<b>CHAPTER 7: General discussion.....</b>	<b>202</b>
Summary and integration of results	203
How identity affects surveillance	204
How surveillance affects identity	206
The framing of surveillance	209
Surveillance and threat	210
A systematic and psychological approach	212
Inconsistencies and unexpected results	214
Limitations and future directions	216
Implications of the current research	221
Theoretical implications	221
Practical implications	225
Overall contribution	227
Concluding remarks	228
<b>References.....</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>258</b>

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Path diagram illustrating that belief about the purpose of CCTV mediates the effect of identification with the city on perception of privacy infringement	<i>Page</i> 65
Figure 2.2	Mean perception that surveillance infringes on one's privacy, as a function of identity salience and source of surveillance	71
Figure 2.3	Mean perception that the purpose of surveillance is safety, as a function of identity salience and source of surveillance	72
Figure 2.4	Path diagram illustrating that belief about the purpose of CCTV mediates the effect of the interaction between identity salience and source of surveillance on perception of privacy infringement	73
Figure 3.1	Mean perception of leader perceptions, as a function of type of identity and level of surveillance	92
Figure 3.2	Mean perception of leader perceptions, as a function of type of identity and level of surveillance	98
Figure 3.3	Mean perception of privacy infringement, as a function of type of identity and level of surveillance	99
Figure 3.4	Mean level of willingness to work for the group, as a function of type of identity and level of surveillance	101
Figure 3.5	Path diagram illustrating that leader perceptions mediate the effect of identity and surveillance on levels of willingness to work for the group	102
Figure 3.6	Path diagram illustrating that the effect of identity and surveillance on leader perceptions is partially mediated by perceptions of privacy infringement	103
Figure 4.1	Mean productivity (number of aeroplanes) as a function of surveillance condition	119
Figure 4.2	Mean level of helping behaviour as a function of type of identity and level of surveillance	121
Figure 5.1	Mean perception of privacy infringement as a function of the framing of surveillance	137
Figure 5.2	Mean level of acceptability of surveillance as a function of the framing of surveillance	138
Figure 5.3	Mean level of negative emotion towards surveillance as a function of the framing of surveillance	139
Figure 5.4	Path diagram illustrating that negative emotion towards surveillance mediates the effect of the framing of surveillance on perceptions of privacy infringement	140

Figure 5.5	Path diagram illustrating that perceptions of privacy infringement mediates the effect of the framing of surveillance on acceptability of surveillance	141
Figure 5.6	Mean level of acceptability of surveillance as a function of the framing of surveillance	148
Figure 5.7	Mean level of necessity of surveillance as a function of the framing of surveillance	149
Figure 5.8	Mean level of trust in authorities as a function of the framing of surveillance	150
Figure 5.9	Path diagram illustrating that trust in authorities mediates the effect of the framing of surveillance on appraisals of the purpose of surveillance as safety	151
Figure 5.10	Path diagram testing the hypothesis that appraisals of purpose as safety would mediate the effect of the framing of surveillance on infringement of privacy	152
Figure 5.11	Path diagram testing the hypothesis that appraisals of the purpose of surveillance as safety would mediate the effect of the framing of surveillance on acceptability of surveillance	153
Figure 5.12	Path diagram testing the hypothesis that appraisals of the purpose of surveillance as safety would mediate the effect of the framing of surveillance on necessity of surveillance	154
Table 5.1	Mean scores on all dependent variables, Study 5.3	161
Figure 5.13	Mean appraisal that the purpose of surveillance was to protect students and target locals, as a function of the framing of surveillance	162
Figure 6.1	Mean perception of privacy infringement as a function of level of threat	180
Figure 6.2	Mean perceived necessity of surveillance as a function of level of threat	181
Figure 6.3	Mean appraisals of the purpose of surveillance as a function of level of threat	182
Figure 6.4	Path diagram illustrating that appraisals of the purpose of surveillance as preventing misbehaviour mediates the effect of level of threat on perceived necessity of surveillance	183
Figure 6.5	Path diagram illustrating that perceived necessity of surveillance mediates the effect of level of threat on privacy infringement	184
Figure 6.6	Mean acceptability of surveillance as a function of level of threat and level of surveillance	193
Figure 6.7	Mean trust in the School's intentions as a function of level of threat and level of surveillance	195

## STATEMENT OF THE CANDIDATE'S CONTRIBUTION TO CO-AUTHORED PAPERS AND CHAPTERS

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this thesis were written up as papers for publication, two of which are currently in press. These papers are reproduced here largely unchanged and so a certain amount of repetition is inevitable, to ensure that arguments within chapters flow as originally intended. Some changes have been made, however; for example, links between chapters have been identified, and where American spelling was used, this has been changed to British English for consistency. As reported in more detail below, the major contribution to the papers, and all chapters of this thesis, was made by the candidate. However, please note that in order to recognise the collaborative nature of the research, the first person is used only in the plural sense (i.e., “we” rather than “I”) throughout this thesis.

Studies 2.1 and 2.2

O'Donnell, A. T., Jetten, J., & Ryan, M. K. (2010). Who is watching over you? The role of shared identity in perceptions of surveillance. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 40*, 135-147.

These two studies, presented in this thesis in Chapter 2, were submitted as a paper to the *European Journal of Social Psychology* and accepted for publication in January 2009. The research was designed by the candidate in collaboration with Jolanda Jetten and Michelle Ryan. The candidate supervised the data collection which was carried out by undergraduate students. The data were analysed by the candidate, and the interpretation of results and writing of the manuscript was carried out by the candidate under the supervision of Jolanda Jetten and Michelle Ryan.

Studies 3.1 and 3.2

O'Donnell, A. T., Jetten, J., & Ryan, M. K. (in press). Watching over your own: How surveillance moderates the impact of shared identity on perceptions of leader and follower behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

Studies 3.1 and 3.2 of this thesis, forming Chapter 3, were originally written as a paper and submitted to the *European Journal of Social Psychology*. The paper was accepted for publication in July 2009. The studies were designed by the candidate under supervision from Jolanda Jetten and Michelle Ryan. The candidate was responsible for data collection and data analysis (with supervisory advice). Finally, the candidate wrote the paper in collaboration with Jolanda Jetten and Michelle Ryan.

Study 4

O'Donnell, A. T., Ryan, M. K., & Jetten, J. (2009). The hidden costs of surveillance on performance. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.

This study, comprising the whole of Chapter 4, was written as a short report for the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. The paper has received reviews and appears in the thesis in its revised (although not final) form. The study was designed by the candidate with supervisory support from Michelle Ryan and Jolanda Jetten. The candidate carried out the data collection, then analysed the data with supervisory support. The paper was written by the candidate in collaboration with Michelle Ryan and Jolanda Jetten.

### Studies 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3

These three studies have not yet been written up for publication. Each study was designed by the candidate with supervisory support from Michelle Ryan. The candidate supervised data collection by undergraduate students Megan Clinch and Sarah Farrar for Studies 5.1 and 5.2, and collected the data for Study 5.3. The data were analysed by the candidate with supervisory advice. Finally, the chapter was written by the candidate in collaboration with Michelle Ryan and Jolanda Jetten.

### Studies 6.1 and 6.2

These studies have not been prepared for publication as of yet. Both studies were designed by the candidate with supervisory advice from Michelle Ryan. Data collection for Study 6.1 was carried out by an undergraduate student, Tamsin Meadows, under the supervision of the candidate, and the candidate collected the data for Study 6.2 herself. Data analysis was carried out by the candidate with support from Michelle Ryan, and the candidate wrote the chapter with supervisory input from Michelle Ryan and Jolanda Jetten.



## **STATEMENT OF THE SUPERVISORS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO CO-AUTHORED PAPERS AND CHAPTERS**

As outlined in the candidate's statement, the substantive work in the research presented in this thesis was conducted by the candidate. This includes the literature review, study design, statistical analysis, and interpretation. The supervisors contributed to the papers and other chapters by giving advice on study design, statistical analysis, and writing style. Also, they gave guidance on the theoretical framing of this thesis through discussion of the contents and their arrangement in the chapters as outlined above.

Prof. Michelle Ryan (first supervisor)

Prof. Jolanda Jetten (second supervisor)